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ABSTRACT

Cultural and language differences of the elderly Hispanic population and socioeconomic and health problems which afflict them disproportionately represent a unique and difficult challenge to public and private service providers. Information from various federal agencies provided material for a report examining demographic characteristics, living arrangements, marital status, housing tenure, income, poverty, employment status, education, and health of the Hispanic elderly. In 1980, about 791,000 persons of Spanish origin (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, and others) 60 years of age and over represented 2% of the 33 million persons in this age group in the United States. In March 1979, over 83% of older Hispanics lived in metropolitan areas; about 80% lived in a family setting; half of them had completed 6.7 or fewer years of schooling. In 1978 the per capita income in Hispanic families with 65+ heads ($3,749) was only 64% as high as in non-Hispanic families ($5,898); 23% of elderly Hispanics had incomes below the poverty level. The health of the elderly Hispanic population was apparently poorer than that of persons of all races in the same age group, but older Hispanics were less likely to visit doctors or dentists or to be hospitalized. (NEC)

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HISPANIC ELDERLY

STATISTICAL

REPORTS

ON

OLDER
AMERICANS

MAY 1981

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HISPANIC ELDERLY

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HISPANIC ELDERLY

by

Blanch Spruiel Williams*

INTRODUCTION

In 1980 there were about 791,000 persons of Spanish origin 60 years of age and over, who represented 2% of the 33 million persons in this age group in the U.S. Elderly Hispanics are more likely to suffer from problems associated with lower income, higher unemployment, lower educational attainment, and poor health than are elderly non-Hispanics.

These problems must be viewed against the background of the cultural and language differences that exist between this minority group and non-Hispanics. Even among Hispanics themselves, there is a certain degree of heterogeneity stemming from the differences in tradition, custom, and dialect inherent in the various nationalities that make up the Hispanic population.1/ Language is the common bond that cements them together, but for many it is a barrier to the opportunities and services otherwise available to them.

This report is based primarily on statistics published by the Bureau of the Census, the Department of Health and Human Services (formerly Department

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* Statistical Analysis Staff. Technical and editorial review were provided by Donald G. Fowles.

1/ Fernando Torres-Gil and Mona Negm, "Policy Issues Concerning the Hispanic Elderly," Aging Magazine, March-April 1980, pp. 2-3, U.S. Administration on Aging.

of Health, Education and Welfare), and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Except for figures on Old Age Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI), the data used in the report are estimates based on sample surveys. As a result, they are subject to sampling error. Sampling error is primarily a measure of the variations that occur by chance because a sample, rather than a complete census enumeration, is used to survey the population. Caution should be exercised in the use of sample data for a small population group such as elderly Hispanics because of their relatively large sampling errors.

In this report, "Hispanic" persons are defined as persons of "Spanish" origin. This classification is generally derived from survey instruments by a question asking for the person's origin or descent (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or some other Spanish origin). Throughout this report the terms "Hispanic" and "Spanish origin" will be used interchangeably.

This report examines the demographic characteristics, living arrangements, income, poverty, employment, educational attainment, and health of elderly Hispanics. All references to the "elderly" or "older persons" in this report will refer to persons 60 years of age and over. Emphasis is placed on this age group because many social programs are targeted to it. However, other age groups (e.g., 65+ years and 55+ years of age) will be discussed when data for persons 60+ years are not available or when it is deemed appropriate.

POPULATION

Substantial changes occurred in the size of the older segments of the Hispanic population during just the five-year period from March 1975 to March 1980 (Table A). The elderly Hispanic population increased at a rate nearly 2½

times that of the remaining Hispanic population (25% vs. 9%). The increase in the 65+ age group (34%) was substantially higher than the increase for persons 60 years and over. Also, the growth rate for older Hispanics during this period was more than twice the rate for non-Hispanics in the same age group (25% vs. 10%).

In terms of absolute numbers, elderly Hispanics grew by about 156 thousand or an average annual increase of 31 thousand persons between March 1975 and March 1980 (Table 1). Together with the 635 thousand persons who had already reached their 60th birthday as of March 1975, that increase brought the number of older Hispanics to 791 thousand in March 1980.

Like elderly women not of Hispanic origin, elderly Hispanic women increased in numbers at about the same rate as their male counterparts. However, the rate of increase for these women was about two and a half times as fast as that of non-Hispanic women (26% compared to 10%).

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Table A

PERCENT INCREASE IN POPULATION, BY SPANISH ORIGIN AND AGE, MARCH 1975-1980

(Data exclude persons in institutions)

Age	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin
55+ years	23.6	9.6
60+ years	24.6	10.0
65+ years	33.7	12.0

Source: See Table 1.

The Hispanic population is much younger (median age 22 years in 1979) than the overall U.S. population (median age 30 years).2/ The youthful structure of this population stems from a relatively high fertility rate, a large proportion of immigrants (who tend to be young), and a probable lower life expectancy. Another factor may be the aging of the remaining survivors of the nearly half-million Mexicans who legally immigrated to the United States during the 1920's.3/ As a result, older persons represented 6% of the Hispanic population, compared to 16% for non-Hispanics in March 1980. Among Blacks about 11% were 60+ years old.

Within the Hispanic population, Cubans had the largest proportion of persons age 65+ (11%) in 1979, about the same proportion as non-Hispanics.4/ The proportion dropped to 3-4% for the other specified nationalities--Mexican, Central or South American, and Puerto Rican--and to 8% for all other Hispanics whose nationality was not specified.

The distribution of elderly Hispanics by type of Spanish origin varies significantly. About one-half of all elderly Hispanics were of Mexican origin in 1979, with the proportion falling off sharply to 17% for Cubans and 8% for Puerto Ricans.5/ This large proportion of Mexicans in the Hispanic population stems from the proximity and historical ties of the southwestern United States to Mexico.

2/ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 870, table 2, and Series P-60, No. 124, table 11. Data for Hispanics exclude persons in institutions.

3/ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, Part I, p. 107.

4/ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 354, table 3.

5/ Ibid.

GEOGRAPHY

Older Hispanics are much more concentrated in large cities than non-Hispanics, and conversely less likely to live in nonmetropolitan areas. In March 1979, about half of older Hispanics lived in central cities of metropolitan areas compared to only 3 of every 10 elderly non-Hispanics (Table 2). One-third of both groups lived in suburban areas, but only one-sixth of Hispanics lived outside metropolitan areas compared to one-third for non-Hispanics.

Current data on the distribution of the older Hispanic population by State are not available, but it is likely that the older segment is distributed similarly to the total Hispanic population.6/ Close to three-quarters (78%) of the 12 million Hispanics of all ages in March 1979 were living in New York, Florida, and 5 southwestern States (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas).7/ As to State and regional areas of concentration by nationality, data from the 1970 census show that elderly Cubans were found most heavily in Florida, Mexicans in five southwestern States, and Puerto Ricans in New York.8/

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Most older Hispanics live with relatives. Some elderly gain from this pattern of living by receiving emotional and financial support, protection against household crime, relief from loneliness, and a chance to enjoy their cultural preference with their immediate family. Elderly Hispanics are more likely to be living in a family setting than their counterparts in the general population. About 80% lived

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6/ For example, in 1970 the proportion of Hispanics of all ages and those 60+ years old who lived in New York, Florida, and the 5 southwestern States was 75%. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, Subject Reports, Final Report PC(2)-1C, table 3.

7/ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 354, table B.

8/ U.S. Bureau of the Census, op. cit., footnote 6.

in a family setting in March 1979 compared to 71% for elderly non-Hispanics (Table 3). Nearly all of this difference is accounted for by the living arrangements of females. There was little or no difference in the living arrangements of elderly Hispanic and non-Hispanic men.

Among elderly Hispanic women, about three-fourths (76%) lived with family members compared to less than two-thirds (61%) for non-Hispanics. Furthermore, one-fourth were living in families where they were neither the family head nor the wife of the family head, but were related to the family head as parent or in another way (e.g., sibling or aunt). Only 9% of elderly non-Hispanic women reported similar living arrangements.

The proximity of elderly persons to their children is an important factor in the well-being of many older persons because family and friends provide the bulk of supportive services (other than medical and financial help) received by older persons in this country.9/ Older Hispanics appear to have an advantage over their non-Hispanic counterparts in this respect. Not only are older Hispanics more likely to be living in the same household with their children and other relatives, but they are probably more likely to live near children who maintain separate households due to the relatively high level of geographic concentration of the Hispanic population in the U.S.

There is little difference between Hispanics and others in type of family for families headed by a person 65 years or older. About four of every five such families in 1979 were husband-wife families, about one in seven were headed by elderly females, and less than 5% were headed by elderly males with no spouse present (Table 4). However, elderly Hispanic families were larger and much more likely to contain children of the family head. About 40% contained 3 or more

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9/ U.S. General Accounting Office, Conditions of Older People: National Information System Needed, September 1979, pp. 14-15.

persons (18% for non-Hispanics) and 41% contained one or more of the elderly family head's children (20% for non-Hispanics).

Although Hispanic families with heads under 65 years of age are about as likely to contain one or more members 65+ years old (10% did so in 1979, compared to 8% for non-Hispanic families), elderly Hispanic family members are more likely to be members of families with younger family heads than their non-Hispanic counterparts. About one-fourth of elderly (65+) Hispanic family members lived in families headed by relatives under the age of 65 (mostly their children), compared to one-ninth of non-Hispanics (Table B).

Table B

PRESENCE OF FAMILY MEMBERS 65+ YEARS OLD, FOR FAMILIES BY AGE AND SPANISH ORIGIN OF HEAD, MARCH 1979

(Data exclude persons in institutions)

Presence of family members and Spanish origin of head	All families	Age of family head		
		Under 45 years	45-64 years	65+ years
SPANISH ORIGIN				
Total families (000's)	2,741	1,815	711	214
With members 65+ years (000's)	312	43	55	214
Percent of total	11.4	2.4	7.7	100.0
Number of members 65+ years (000's) ..	410	44	57	309
Percent distribution	100.0	10.7	13.9	75.4
NOT OF SPANISH ORIGIN				
Total families (000's)	55,063	27,254	19,514	8,296
With members 65+ years (000's)	9,917	341	1,279	8,296
Percent of total	18.0	1.3	6.6	100.0
Number of members 65+ years (000's) ..	15,155	376	1,369	13,409
Percent distribution	100.0	2.5	9.0	88.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 352, table 3.

About 20% of elderly Hispanics lived alone or with nonrelatives. About twice as many women as men were living so, reflecting the larger number of widows than widowers and the fact that more men remarry after the death of a spouse.

These overall measures mask the differences in living arrangements between the various nationalities within the older Hispanic population. For example, a survey of 1800 Hispanics 55+ years old conducted in 1976 for the Administration on Aging indicates that Puerto Ricans were more apt to live alone (38%) and Cubans were least likely to do so (15%), with Mexican Americans and other Hispanics falling in between (24-27%). Living with spouse was more prevalent among Cubans 55+ years old (60%) than all other Hispanics (35-52%).10/

MARITAL STATUS

In March 1979, the distribution of Hispanic men and women in the 65+ population by marital status was quite similar to that of comparable non-Hispanics (Table 5). For example, about three-quarters of the men in each group were married and living with their wives and about half of the women were widowed. Although data on life expectancy are not available for Hispanics, it is probable that, like non-Hispanics, the high proportion of widows among older Hispanic women is the result of longer life expectancy for women than for men coupled with the social custom of women marrying men older than themselves. Thus, Hispanic women outnumbered men in 1980 by a ratio of 122 women per 100 men in the age group 65 and over, although by a smaller ratio than the 143 women per 100 men for non-Hispanics.

10/ Carmela G. Lacayo, Principal Investigator; Jean K. Crawford, Author; A National Study to Assess the Service Needs of the Hispanic Elderly, National Association for Hispanic Elderly, December 1980, p. 85. Prepared for Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, under Grant No. 0090-A-1295.

Table C

TENURE OF HOUSING UNITS WITH HEAD 65+ YEARS OLD,
BY SPANISH ORIGIN OF HEAD, 1978

Tenure	Spanish origin		Not of Spanish origin	
	Number (000's)	Percent distribution	Number (000's)	Percent distribution
Total units ...	384	100.0	15,391	100.0
Owner occupied ...	205	53.4	11,012	71.5
Renter occupied ..	179	46.6	4,379	28.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Housing Reports, Series H-150-78, Part A, tables A-1 and A-9.

Taken together, about two-fifths (44%) of Hispanics 65+ years old were either single, widowed, or divorced in March 1979--about a fourth (23%) of the men and three-fifths (62%) of the women. A recent study indicates that older Mexicans and Cubans are more likely to be living with a spouse than older Puerto Ricans and persons of other Hispanic origin. 11/ The data do not indicate whether these differences are related solely to the social structure of these nationalities or whether other factors such as selective migration by marital status are also involved.

HOUSING TENURE

In 1978 there were about 16 million households with a head 65 years of age and older. About 384 thousand or 2% were households headed by persons of Hispanic origin. Although the majority (53%) of elderly Hispanic household heads owned their homes, this proportion was considerably smaller than the 72% of non-Hispanic elderly householders who owned their home (Table C).

11/ Ibid., p. 83.

Most owner-occupied housings units headed by persons 65+ years old are owned free and clear (without mortgage or similar debt), but about one-fourth (27%) of such Hispanic households were carrying a mortgage in 1976 compared to only one-sixth (16%) of comparable non-Hispanic households. 12/

INCOME

The income of elderly Hispanic families was significantly lower than non-Hispanic families in 1978. For example, Hispanic families with elderly (60+) heads reported a median income of $9,390, about $2,700 less than non-Hispanics. For all three age groups shown in Table 6 (heads 55+, 60+, and 65+ years old), Hispanic families reported median incomes 22% lower than their non-Hispanic counterparts. Although elderly Hispanic families were represented at all levels of income (1 in 10 had incomes above $25,000), they were twice as likely to be at the low end of the scale. About 21% had incomes below $5,000 compared to only 11% for non-Hispanics.

The income comparison above actually overstates the financial situation of the Hispanic elderly. As noted earlier, elderly Hispanic households are more likely to be making rental or mortgage payments. In addition, elderly Hispanic families must spread their income among a larger number of family members. There were approximately 3 persons in the average Hispanic family headed by someone 65 years old or older, compared to 2.3 persons in comparable non-Hispanic families (Table D). Thus, the per capita income (average income per family member) in Hispanic families with 65+ heads ($3,749) was only 64% as high as in non-Hispanic families ($5,898), in contrast to 80% when mean family incomes for these groups are compared without regard to family size.

12/ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976 Annual Housing Survey, unpublished data tabulated by the Administration on Aging. The data are restricted to one-family homes on less than 10 acres without a commercial establishment or medical or dental office on the property. Cooperatives and condominiums are excluded.

Table D

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES WITH HEADS 55+ AND 65+ YEARS OLD, BY SPANISH ORIGIN OF HEAD, MARCH 1979

Subject	55+ years		65+ years	
	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin
Number of families (000's)	468	17,384	214	8,296
Mean family income in 1978 (dollars)	$14,192	$18,393	$11,123	$13,822
Number of family member (000's)	1,491	44,801	636	19,442
Average number per family	3.19	2.58	2.97	2.34
Per capita income in 1978 (dollars).	$4,455	$7,137	$3,749	$5,898
Average number of earners	1.46	1.24	1.01	0.73
Mean years of school of head	6.7	10.6	5.4	9.8

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 352, table 3, and No. 123, table 2.

These differences in income levels are of greater concern because elderly Hispanic families are not only larger, but they have more persons receiving earnings income from some form of employment than do non-Hispanic families (Table D). Even the increased number of earners does not make up for the low level of income reported by elderly Hispanic families.

There are many reasons why Hispanic income is so low. Language and cultural differences may limit their employment opportunities. The higher proportion of foreign born persons among Hispanics than non-Hispanics results in a higher

proportion of Hispanic workers with a relatively short attachment to the U.S. labor force. This eventually translates into smaller Social Security and private pension checks after retirement.

It is also well established that low levels of formal training will, on average, result in lack of access to many of the higher-paying occupations. Table D shows that elderly (65+) heads of Hispanic families had an average of less than 6 years of schooling compared to 10 years for non-Hispanics. (See section on "Education" below for more information on this topic.)

Current data on the occupation of Hispanic workers by age are not available. Table 7 shows the major occupation group of pre-elderly employed Hispanics and non-Hispanics (45-64 years old) in 1970. These workers would now be 56-75 years old and most will probably be retired. Although data on major occupation groups obscure many of the vital differences between ethnic groups that could be observed with detailed occupation data, the occupation-group data illustrate the general outline of the differences. In 1970, the "pre-elderly" Hispanic workers were much less likely to be employed in the white collar occupations and more likely to be employed as blue collar, farm, and service workers. Compared to non-Hispanics, the only major occupation groups in which Hispanic males of this age group were more likely to be employed were equipment operatives, non-farm laborers (including construction work), farm laborers and foremen, and service workers (excluding private household workers).

Although data on Social Security and private pension income are not available for all persons of Spanish origin, the Social Security Administration regularly tabulates data on Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI)--commonly known as Social Security--for persons of

Table E

AVERAGE MONTHLY OASDI BENEFITS TO SELECTED SPANISH-SURNAMED AND OTHER BENEFICIARIES IN FIVE SOUTHWESTERN STATES, JUNE 1978

Type of beneficiary	Average monthly benefit		Spanish surname as percent of all other
	Spanish surname	All other	
Retired worker	$226.35	$259.10	87.4
Male	245.07	288.59	84.9
Female	190.00	224.50	84.6
Spouse of retired worker ...	102.71	133.53	76.9
Widow(er) of retired worker.	202.04	240.92	83.9

Note: Southwestern States include Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas.

Source: Social Security Administration, Division of OASDI Studies, unpublished data.

"Spanish surname," using a list of surnames compiled by the Bureau of the Census and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. This tabulation is prepared only for 5 southwestern States (see footnote in Table E). The use of a list of Spanish surnames for this tabulation obviously includes some persons who are not of Hispanic origin and excludes some who are. 13/ Nevertheless, the data should reflect the general differences between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic populations.

In June 1978, persons of Spanish surname received a considerably smaller average monthly payment from the OASDI program than all other beneficiaries. Retired workers and widows and widowers of such workers received about 85% of the amount received by persons with non-Spanish surnames, and spouses of retired workers received only 77% (Table E).

13/ The most obvious examples involve the common change of surname for a woman upon marriage. For example, a non-Hispanic widow of a man with a Spanish surname would be included in the "Spanish surname" category of this tabulation.

POVERTY

Elderly Hispanics are much more likely to have incomes below the poverty level than non-Hispanics. In 1979, nearly one-fourth (23%) were below this level compared to one-seventh (14%) for non-Hispanics (Table 8). From 1975 to 1978 the poverty rate fell for both elderly Hispanics and non-Hispanics, though more dramatically for the former (10.1 vs. 1.1 percentage points), thus closing the gap between their poverty rates from 17 percentage points to 8 percentage points. The poverty rate rose for both groups in 1979, although the increase for Hispanics was not statistically significant. Altogether, about one-third of elderly Hispanics had incomes below the near-poverty level (125% of the poverty level).

Like non-Hispanics, older Hispanics who live alone or with nonrelatives (unrelated individuals) experience a higher rate of poverty than those living in families. In 1978, the poverty rate for Hispanic unrelated individuals 60+ years old was 41%, over twice as high as the rate for older family members (15%) [14/]

It is important to keep in mind that the large proportion of poor persons among the Hispanic elderly represents a needs-resources gap still remaining after payments of such benefits as public assistance, social security, and income from other public programs aimed at low-income persons. Some of these Hispanics probably receive no assistance from these programs because of ineligibility, lack of information, language barrier, and personal choice.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

In 1979, elderly Hispanics exhibited the same tendency to participate in

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14/ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 124, table 11.

the labor force as non-Hispanics (Table 9). However, the labor force participation rate varied considerably by age and sex. The participation rate for Hispanic men was about the same as non-Hispanic men, and the rate for Hispanic women was slightly below that for non-Hispanic women. Hispanic women were much less represented in the labor force than Hispanic men. In every group, the participation rate dropped with increasing age. Among the 564 thousand Hispanic men who were 55 years old and over, about half (49%) were either working or actively looking for work. This rate fell to 31% of the 60+ age group and 19% of those age 65 and older. Among Hispanic women in the same age groups (55+ years, 60+ years, and 65+ years), the participation rates were 20%, 12%, and 5%, respectively. Unemployment rates for older Hispanic men in the labor force were about twice as high as non-Hispanic men.

A lower proportion of older Hispanic workers are employed in the relatively high-paying professional and other white-collar occupations than non-Hispanics. According to the 1970 census, only 26% of employed Hispanics 65 years and older worked in white-collar occupations compared to nearly half (46%) of older non-Hispanics.

EDUCATION

In March 1979, there continued to be an unfavorable difference in the level of formal educational attainment of elderly Hispanics compared to elderly non-Hispanics. Half of elderly Hispanics had completed 6.7 or fewer years of school in March 1979, about 4.2 years lower than for non-Hispanics in the same age group (Table F). Furthermore, only 20% of this older group had received high school diplomas compared to 45% of elderly non-Hispanics. The levels of school attainment for elderly Hispanic men and women did not differ appreciably.

The above disparity reflects the limited opportunities that were available to older Hispanics in obtaining formal training during their younger years. Future cohorts of elderly Hispanics will have considerably higher levels of educational attainment as the younger adults of today reach their later ages. The median number of school years completed by Hispanics 25-44 years old in 1979 was 12.0 years, only 0.8 years less than their non-Hispanic counterparts (Table 10).

Table F

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF PERSONS 60+ YEARS OLD, BY SPANISH ORIGIN AND SEX, MARCH 1979

(Data exclude persons in institutions)

Sex	Median years of school completed		Percent high school graduate	
	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin
Total ...	6.7	10.9	19.5	45.1
Male	6.7	10.7	20.2	43.9
Female	6.7	11.0	19.5	46.0

Source: See Table 10.

When comparing formal school attainment in 1979 of the older Hispanic population by country of origin, persons of Mexican origin clearly had received the fewest years of schooling. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of those 65 years and older had completed less than 5 years of school, compared to 45% for all Hispanics age 65+ and only 8% for non-Hispanics in this age group (Table G).

Table G

YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED BY TYPE OF SPANISH ORIGIN, FOR PERSONS 45-64 AND 65+ YEARS OLD, MARCH 1979

(Data exclude persons in institutions)

Type of Spanish origin	45-64 years		65+ years	
	Percent completed less than 5 years of school	Percent completed 4 years of high school or more	Percent completed less than 5 years of school	Percent completed 4 years of high school or more
Total Spanish origin.....	21.3	33.5	44.9	15.9
Mexican origin	30.0	25.3	64.3	7.1
Puerto Rican origin.....	18.5	26.3	(B)	(B)
Cuban origin.....	5.5	44.5	19.3	26.9
Other Spanish origin....	8.3	54.6	20.5	27.3
Not of Spanish origin.....	2.6	65.0	8.3	40.7

(B) Base less than 75,000.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 354, table E.

HEALTH

Surveys conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics suggest that the health of the Hispanic population age 65 and over may not be as good as that of persons of all races in the same age group, but that older Hispanics are less likely to visit doctors or dentists or to be hospitalized. About 37% of these Hispanic persons perceived their own health as fair or poor in 1976-77, which was 6 percentage points higher than that of the comparable population of all races (Table 11). The surveys showed a similar pattern among the 45-64 age group.

The proportion of the population with "limitation of activity" is a measure of the long-term impact of chronic disease. This proportion includes persons who are limited in their ability to perform their major activity, such as working, keeping house, or going to school, as well as those who are limited in other activities such as shopping, church attendance, visiting, etc. Data from the surveys indicate that 43% of the Hispanic population 65+ years old was limited in activity because of chronic conditions, about the same proportion as for persons of all races in the same age group.

The total number of restricted activity days and the number of bed disability days per person per year are two other measures of the impact of illness. In 1976-77, Hispanics 65+ years old had 42 restricted-activity days and 19 bed-disability days per person per year. These figures were somewhat higher than for persons of all races in this age group. Restricted activity does not necessarily imply complete inactivity but it does imply at least cutting to a minimum one's usual activities.

The Hispanic group age 65 and over had fewer dental and physician visits, when measured by the proportion with one visit or more, than the comparable

population of all races even though a higher proportion of the Hispanics perceive their health as fair or poor.

CONCLUSION

The elderly Hispanic population is growing rapidly. Between March 1975 and March 1980, these Hispanics increased in numbers at a rate more than twice that of non-Hispanics in the corresponding age group. Although data projecting future changes in the size of the elderly Hispanic population are not available, it is probable that a high growth rate will continue for many years in the future as more Hispanics in the younger age group reach the older categories.

They were more likely than non-Hispanics to be living with relatives. The income of elderly Hispanics continues to lag behind that of elderly non-Hispanics and their poverty rate is nearly twice as high. In addition to this disadvantage, their educational attainment level is below that of non-Hispanics, their unemployment rate is twice as great, and they appear to suffer from poorer health.

Low levels of education, low incomes, and poor health can act as barriers to services by restricting knowledge about such services and limiting the ability to apply for them. Difficulty with English is another barrier to services which are not adequately targeted to needy Hispanics.

Cultural differences can also affect their rate of participation and level of benefits. For example, Supplemental Security Income benefits are reduced for eligible elderly persons who share a household with other persons. Thus, the higher propensity of elderly Hispanics to live with family members

for economic and other reasons serves to lower their individual incomes. 15/

The cultural and language differences of (and within) the elderly Hispanic population, and the socioeconomic and health problems which afflict them disproportionately, represent a unique and difficult challenge to the public and private service providers in this country.

15/ Torres-Gil and Negm, op.cit., footnote 1, p. 5.

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Table 1

PERSONS OF SPANISH ORIGIN 55+ YEARS OLD,
BY AGE AND SEX, 1970, 1975 AND 1980

(Data for 1975 and 1980 exclude persons in institutions)

Age and year	Both sexes			Male (000's)	Female	
	Number (000's)	Percent of Spanish origin of all ages	Percent of all races in same age group		Number (000's)	Percent of both sexes
55+ YEARS						
March 1980..	1,148	9.3	2.6	525	623	54.3
March 1975..	929	8.3	2.3	422	507	54.6
April 1970 1/	862	9.5	2.2	405	457	53.0
60+ YEARS						
March 1980..	791	6.4	2.4	357	435	55.0
March 1975..	635	5.7	2.1	290	344	54.2
April 1970 1/	606	6.7	2.1	284	323	53.2
65+ YEARS						
March 1980..	544	4.4	2.3	248	297	54.6
March 1975..	407	3.6	1.9	189	218	53.6
April 1970 1/	404	4.5	2.0	188	217	53.7

1/ See Appendix for a discussion of the comparability of 1970 census and 1975 and 1980 CPS data on Spanish origin.

Source: Data for 1980 and 1975 are from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 125, table 20; Series P-20, No. 290, table 6; Series P-60, No. 102, table 6; and unpublished data from the March 1975 CPS. Data for 1970 are from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, Subject Reports, Final Report PC(2)-1C, table 3; and "Detailed Characteristics," Final Report PC(1)-D1, U.S. Summary, table 203.

Table 2

METROPOLITAN-NONMETROPOLITAN RESIDENCE OF PERSONS 60+ AND 65+ YEARS OLD, BY SPANISH ORIGIN, MARCH 1979

(Data exclude persons in institutions. Metropolitan areas as defined for the 1970 census)

Residence	60+ years		65+ years	
	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin
Total (000's)	772	31,823	539	22,636
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Metropolitan areas	83.4	63.4	82.7	63.0
Central cities	49.2	29.2	50.5	30.0
Outside central cities ..	34.3	34.2	32.3	33.0
Nonmetropolitan areas	16.3	36.6	17.1	37.0

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 124, tables 9 and 42, and unpublished data from the March 1979 CPS.

Table 3

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF PERSONS 60+ AND 65+ YEARS OLD, BY SPANISH ORIGIN, MARCH 1979

(Data exclude persons in institutions)

Living arrangements	Both sexes		Male		Female	
	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin
60+ YEARS						
Total (000's)	772	31,823	351	13,599	420	18,225
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Family members	79.7	71.2	83.0	84.2	76.0	61.4
Head of family	39.6	39.0	74.1	79.8	11.0	8.5
Wife of family head ...	21.5	25.0	(X)	(X)	39.5	43.7
Other family member ...	18.3	7.2	10.0	4.5	25.5	9.2
Unrelated individuals 1/ .	20.3	28.8	16.0	15.8	24.0	38.6
65+ YEARS						
Total (000's)	539	22,636	250	9,298	289	13,338
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Family members	77.9	66.9	81.2	82.3	75.1	56.2
Head of family	39.7	36.6	72.0	76.7	11.8	8.1
Wife of family head ...	17.4	21.5	(X)	(X)	32.5	36.5
Other family member ...	20.6	8.7	9.2	5.6	30.8	10.9
Unrelated individuals 1/ .	22.1	33.1	18.8	17.7	24.9	43.8

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.
(X) Not applicable.
1/ Persons who live alone or with nonrelatives.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 124, table 11.

Table 4

TYPE AND SIZE OF FAMILY AND PRESENCE OF OWN CHILDREN, FOR FAMILIES WITH HEAD 55+ AND 65+ YEARS OLD, BY SPANISH ORIGIN, MARCH 1979

(Data exclude persons in institutions)

Subject	Head 55+ years		Head 65+ years	
	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin
All families (000's)	468	17,384	214	8,296
TYPE OF FAMILY				
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Husband-wife	80.0	85.0	79.5	82.8
Female head, no spouse ..	14.5	12.0	15.8	14.0
Male head, no spouse	5.5	2.9	4.7	3.2
SIZE OF FAMILY				
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Husband-wife	50.5	70.0	59.5	82.3
Female head, no spouse ..	21.3	17.9	17.7	12.1
Male head, no spouse	27.9	12.1	22.3	5.7
PRESENCE OF OWN CHILDREN 1/				
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
With own children:				
Of any age	51.6	31.8	40.9	19.8
Under 25 years	35.4	20.0	17.7	5.3
Under 18 years 2/	21.1	8.8	7.9	2.0

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

1/ Sons and daughters, including stepchildren and adopted children, of the householder.

2/ Single (never married) children only.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 352, table 3.

Table 5

MARITAL STATUS OF PERSONS 55+ AND 65+ YEARS OLD, BY SEX, AND SPANISH ORIGIN, MARCH 1979

(Data exclude persons in institutions)

Age and marital status	Male		Female	
	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin
55+ YEARS				
Total (000's)	520	18,772	593	23,921
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single	5.0	5.3	3.7	5.5
Married	81.9	82.0	54.1	52.5
Spouse present ...	75.2	79.4	49.1	50.5
Spouse absent	6.7	2.6	5.1	2.0
Widowed	8.8	8.7	33.4	37.4
Divorced	3.8	4.0	9.1	4.6
65+ YEARS				
Total (000's)	250	9,298	289	13,338
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single	5.6	5.4	3.5	6.1
Married	76.4	77.2	38.1	38.5
Spouse present ...	72.0	74.7	34.6	36.9
Spouse absent.....	4.4	2.5	3.5	1.6
Widowed	14.0	14.1	51.2	52.2
Divorced	3.6	3.3	7.6	3.2

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 349, table 1.

Table 6

MONEY INCOME IN 1978 OF FAMILIES WITH HEAD 55+ YEARS OLD, BY AGE AND SPANISH ORIGIN OF HEAD

(Data exclude persons in institutions. Families as of March 1979)

Money income in 1978	55+ years		60+ years		65+ years	
	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin
Number of families (000's) ..	468	17,384	306	12,395	214	8,296
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than $3,000	5.1	2.6	6.2	2.8	6.1	2.8
$3,000 to $4,999	13.0	6.8	15.0	8.6	19.2	10.4
$5,000 to $6,999	11.5	9.6	13.7	11.9	15.9	15.0
$7,000 to $9,999	15.8	14.2	19.3	16.9	23.8	20.6
$10,000 to $11,999	8.8	8.4	9.8	9.4	6.5	10.4
$12,000 to $14,999	10.9	10.6	9.8	11.6	8.4	11.9
$15,000 to $16,999	5.8	6.1	4.6	5.6	4.7	5.0
$17,000 to $19,999	7.7	7.6	5.9	6.9	5.6	5.6
$20,000 to $24,999	8.5	10.6	6.5	8.7	4.7	6.6
$25,000 or more	13.7	23.5	10.5	17.6	6.1	11.8
Median 1/ (in dollars)	$11,134	$14,276	$9,390	$12,080	$7,938	$10,181
Standard error (in dollars)	$874	$164	$862	$141	$723	$118
Mean (in dollars)	$14,192	$18,393	(NA)	(NA)	$11,123	$13,822

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.
(NA) Not available.

1/ For each of the three age groups, the difference between the median family income for Spanish and non-Spanish families is significant at the 95-percent confidence level (2 standard errors).

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 123, tables 20 and 43.

Table 7

MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP OF EMPLOYED PERSONS 45-64 YEARS OLD, BY SEX AND SPANISH ORIGIN, APRIL 1970

Major occupation group	Male		Female	
	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin
Total employed (000's)...	466	16,433	232	9,885
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White collar	22.2	40.1	33.7	58.4
Professional and technical	6.3	12.0	7.6	14.6
Managers and administrators	6.8	14.1	3.7	5.3
Sales	3.6	6.9	5.4	8.6
Clerical	5.6	7.1	17.0	29.9
Blue collar	56.4	46.6	35.4	18.6
Craftsmen and foremen	22.1	23.2	2.5	2.1
Equipment operatives	23.8	18.3	31.5	15.6
Nonfarm laborers	10.5	5.2	1.4	0.9
Farm	7.6	5.4	1.9	0.9
Farmers and managers	1.5	4.2	0.1	0.4
Laborers and foremen	6.1	1.3	1.8	0.5
Service	13.8	7.9	28.9	22.1
All, exc. priv. household .	13.7	7.8	21.2	17.0
Private household wrkrs ...	0.1	0.1	7.7	5.1

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, Subject Reports, Final Reports PC(2)-1C, table 8; PC(2)-5B, table 11; and PC(2)-7A, table 40.

Table 8

PERSONS 60+ AND 65+ YEARS OLD BELOW THE POVERTY AND NEAR-POVERTY LEVELS, BY SPANISH ORIGIN, 1975-79

(Data exclude persons in institutions. Persons as of March of the following year)

Age and year	Below poverty level		Below near-poverty level 1/	
	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin
NUMBER (000's)				
60+ Years				
1979	182	4,448 *	(NA)	(NA)
1978	157	4,040	250	6,526
1977	157	3,966	232	6,660
1976	191	4,094	261	6,690
1975	200	4,173	271	6,739
65+ Years				
1979	145	3,439 *	211	5,643 *
1978	125	3,108	201	5,220
1977	113	3,064	173	5,329
1976	128	3,185	177	5,344
1975	137	3,180	181	5,314
POVERTY RATE 2/				
60+ Years				
1979	23.0	13.7 *	(NA)	(NA)
1978	20.3	12.7	32.4	20.5 *
1977	21.1 *	12.7 *	31.2	21.3
1976	27.0	13.3	36.9	21.8
1975	30.4	13.8	41.2	22.3
65+ Years				
1979	26.7	14.8 *	38.8	24.3 *
1978	23.2	13.7	37.3	23.1 *
1977	21.9	14.0	33.5	24.3
1976	27.7	14.7	38.2	24.7
1975	32.6	15.0	43.1	25.0
CHANGE DURING SELECTED PERIODS				
60+ Years				
Number (000's):				
1978-1979	25	408 *	(NA)	(NA)
1975-1978	-43	-133	-21	-213
Poverty rate:				
1978-1979	2.7	1.0 *	(NA)	(NA)
1975-1978	-10.1 *	-1.1 *	-8.8	-1.8 *
65+ Years				
Number (000's):				
1978-1979	20	331 *	10	423 *
1975-1978	-12	-72	20	-94
Poverty rate:				
1978-1979	3.5	1.1 *	1.5	1.2 *
1975-1978	-9.4	-1.3 *	-5.8	-1.9 *

(NA) Not available.

1/ Defined as 125% of the poverty level.

2/ Persons below the poverty (or near-poverty) level as a percent of persons at all income levels. All differences in rates between Hispanics and non-Hispanics are statistically significant at the 95-percent confidence level (2.0+ standard errors).

* The difference between this number (or percent) and the number (or percent) for the preceding year is statistically significant at the 95-percent confidence level (2.0+ standard errors).

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 123, tables 14-1, 14-2, 14-3, tables 2 and 11; and unpublished data from the March 1978-79 Current Population Surveys.

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Table 9

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF PERSONS 55+, 60+, AND 65+ YEARS OLD, BY SPANISH ORIGIN AND SEX, 1980

(Numbers are annual averages shown in thousands. Data exclude persons in institutions)

Sex and employment status	55+ years		60+ years		65+ years	
	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin
BOTH SEXES						
Total	1,227	43,647	815	32,778	555	23,337
In civilian labor force	409	14,367	166	7,343	63	2,958
Percent of total	33.3	32.9	20.4	22.4	11.4	12.7
Employed	385	13,907	155	7,110	59	2,868
Unemployed	24	460	11	233	4	90
Percent of labor force	5.9	3.2	6.6	3.2	6.7	3.0
Not in labor force	819	29,278	650	25,434	492	20,379
MALE						
Total	564	19,183	366	14,009	248	9,591
In civilian labor force	278	8,763	114	4,530	48	1,829
Percent of total	49.3	45.7	31.1	32.3	19.4	19.1
Employed	260	8,483	105	4,384	44	1,775
Unemployed	18	280	9	147	4	54
Percent of labor force	6.5	3.2	7.9	3.2	8.7	3.0
Not in labor force	287	10,418	253	9,478	200	7,762
FEMALE						
Total	664	24,463	450	18,768	308	13,745
In civilian labor force	132	5,603	52	2,813	15	1,129
Percent of total	19.9	22.9	11.6	15.0	4.9	8.2
Employed	125	5,424	50	2,726	15	1,093
Unemployed	7	179	2	86	-	36
Percent of labor force	5.3	3.2	3.8	3.1	-	3.2
Not in labor force	532	18,860	397	15,956	292	12,617

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, Vol 28, No.1, pp.164-165, January 1981, and unpublished data from the 1980 CPS.

Table 10

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF PERSONS 25+ YEARS OLD, BY AGE, SPANISH ORIGIN, AND SEX, MARCH 1979

(Data exclude persons in institutions)

Sex and years of school completed	25-44 years		45-59 years		60+ years		65+ years	
	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin	Spanish origin	Not of Spanish origin
BOTH SEXES								
Total (000's)	3,293	55,371	1,302	32,735	772	31,823	539	22,636
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
None	2.5	0.3	6.8	0.4	16.6	1.7	20.0	2.2
Elementary: 1-4 years	9.0	0.4	14.0	1.9	22.0	5.3	24.9	6.1
5-7 years	16.1	1.8	19.0	5.7	21.5	12.5	21.3	14.0
8 years	6.5	2.7	11.1	8.3	11.5	19.0	10.3	21.1
High school: 1-3 years	15.8	11.4	14.8	16.2	8.8	16.3	7.6	16.0
4 years	30.0	41.0	23.0	40.3	11.4	27.2	9.0	23.6
College: 1-3 years	12.5	19.6	6.2	12.9	3.6	8.9	3.2	8.4
4+ years	7.7	22.9	5.2	14.3	4.4	9.1	3.7	8.6
Selected subgroups:								
Less than 5 years	11.5	0.7	20.7	2.3	28.7	7.0	44.9	8.3
High school graduates	50.2	83.4	34.5	67.5	19.5	45.1	15.9	40.7
Median years of school	12.0	12.8	8.9	12.4	6.7	10.9	5.7	10.1
MALE								
Total (000's)	1,557	27,102	626	15,752	351	13,399	250	9,298
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
None	2.7	0.4	6.5	0.5	15.7	2.1	20.0	2.7
Elementary : 1-4 years	9.6	0.4	13.4	2.2	22.8	6.1	24.8	7.1
5-7 years	15.9	1.9	17.7	6.3	21.1	13.3	20.6	15.1
8 years	6.6	3.0	11.8	9.1	11.1	18.9	10.4	21.0
High school: 1-3 years	15.7	9.8	14.7	15.6	9.1	15.7	7.2	15.5
4 years	25.8	36.5	22.5	34.6	10.8	24.5	8.9	21.0
College: 1-3 years	14.7	20.6	6.2	12.8	4.0	9.0	3.6	8.0
4+ years	9.3	27.3	7.0	19.0	5.4	10.5	4.4	9.7
Selected subgroups:								
Less than 5 years	12.3	0.7	20.0	2.7	38.5	8.2	44.8	9.7
High school graduates	49.8	84.4	35.8	66.3	20.2	43.9	16.9	38.7
Median years of school	11.9	12.9	9.1	12.3	6.7	10.7	5.8	9.8
FEMALE								
Total (000's)	1,736	28,269	676	16,983	420	18,225	289	13,338
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
None	2.2	0.2	7.1	0.3	17.6	1.4	20.8	1.8
Elementary: 1-4 years	8.5	0.4	14.6	1.6	20.7	4.7	24.2	5.5
5-7 years	16.3	1.7	20.1	5.1	21.9	12.0	21.9	13.2
8 years	6.4	2.5	10.2	7.5	11.9	19.1	10.2	21.2
High school: 1-3 years	15.8	12.8	15.1	16.8	8.1	16.8	7.9	16.3
4 years	33.6	45.3	23.2	45.6	11.9	29.2	9.1	25.5
College: 1-3 years	10.5	18.5	5.9	13.0	3.6	8.9	2.8	8.7
4+ years	6.4	18.6	3.3	10.0	4.0	8.0	3.1	7.8
Selected subgroups:								
Less than 5 years	10.8	0.7	21.7	1.9	38.3	6.2	45.0	7.3
High school graduates	50.6	82.4	32.4	68.6	19.5	46.0	15.0	42.0
Median years of school	12.0	12.7	9.3	12.4	6.7	11.0	5.7	10.4

Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 354, table 8, and No. 356, table 2.

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Table 11

SELECTED HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS 45+ YEARS OLD, BY AGE AND SPANISH ORIGIN, 1976-77

(Data are annual averages for the 1976-77 period and exclude persons in institutions)

Subject	45-64 years		65+ years	
	Spanish origin 1/	All races	Spanish origin 1/	All races
Total (000's)	1,597	43,306	505	22,033
Percent with:				
Fair or poor health status (self-assessed)	28.3	22.1	36.5	30.6
Limitation of activity due to chronic conditions	22.3	23.7	43.2	44.2
Some form of health insurance 2/	77.3	90.2	95.7	97.9
Restricted-Activity Days 3/				
Number per person per year	27.7	24.9	42.2	38.2
Bed Days 4/				
Number per person per year	10.4	8.6	19.2	14.8
Physician Visits				
Number per person per year	5.7	5.6	5.5	6.7
Percent of persons with 1 visit or more in year prior to interview	71.8	74.8	79.8	79.8
Dental Visits				
Number per person per year	1.4	1.8	0.7	1.3
Percent of persons with 1 visit or more in year prior to interview	33.3	47.6	21.0	30.6
Hospital Episodes				
Number of days per persons per year	1.5	1.6	2.7	3.1
Percent of persons with 1 episode or more in year prior to interview	12.0	12.3	15.6	18.2

1/ Persons in the Hispanic population may be of any race.

2/ Includes private health insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, and other Federal programs.

3/ Includes bed days, work-loss days, school-loss days, and other restricted-activity days.

4/ Bed days are a subgroup of restricted-activity days.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Health, United States, 1979, tables 1 and 2.

APPENDIX: Comparability Between Current Population Survey and 1970 Census Data

Information about the Spanish origin population was collected by the Bureau of the Census in the 1970 Census of Population and Housing and has been collected regularly since 1973 in the Current Population Survey (CPS). There are several differences in the manner in which these data were collected in the 1970 census as contrasted to the CPS. Some of these differences would affect any comparison between a decennial census and a sample survey. For example, the sample size in the 1970 census for the question on Spanish origin was 1 in 20 persons, whereas the CPS sample is about 1 in 800 persons. Also, the census used a combination of self-enumeration and direct interviews to collect information, while the CPS uses personal interviews only, many conducted by telephone.

The major differences between the census and the CPS in the collection of information on Spanish origin involve the number of Mexican origin categories and the classification of children under 14 years of age. The census question had only one category denoting Mexican origin ("Mexican"), whereas the CPS since 1973 has had four categories (Mexican American, Chicano, Mexican, and Mexicano). In the census, respondents classified their children as to Spanish origin. In the CPS, all children under 14 years are classified as Spanish origin if the head or his wife are of Spanish origin.

Although these differences affect historical comparisons of the number and characteristics of Hispanic persons using 1970 census data and survey data from later years (as in Table 1 of this report), the effect on comparisons for older Hispanics is probably minimal because of the small number of persons involved.